

The Diary of an Isle Royale School Teacher

– by Dorothy Simonson

The published version of her handwritten diary, this is the memoir of a winter on an isolated island in Lake Superior during the Great Depression.

**Peninsula: Essays and Memoirs from Michigan*

– edited by Michael Steinberg

These 37 contemporary essays give a multifaceted evocation of place. The diverse pieces range from nature to cities, giving a sense of the variety, flavor, and distinctiveness of Michigan's character.

**Motor City Memoirs*

– edited by Jennifer Thomas Vanadia

This collection of short reflections is from some of most creative and accomplished people in the world, showcasing Detroit's pearls.

Small Town D.A.

– by John Voelker (Robert Traver)

The stories of the life of a small-town district attorney in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, from the author of *Anatomy of a Murder*, who was also one of Michigan's Supreme Court judges.

Hard Stuff: the Autobiography of Coleman Young

– by Coleman Young & Lonnie Wheeler

From growing up in Detroit to his five terms as its mayor, Young describes his life through the lens of early 20th-century migration to cities, unionism, racial conflict and the political turmoil of the 1970s.

Not all books are still in print and available for purchase, but you may borrow them via your local public library.

* Michigan Notable Book Award winner. More information is available at

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Michigan Memoirs



Michigan, past and present, has been a destination for immigrants from every continent, joining its Native American tribes. Michigan is also home to highly populated urban cities alongside rural farms, remote wilderness areas and the Great Lakes.

The following list of selected memoirs and autobiographies showcases Michigan's unique heritage and experience.

Roommates: My Grandfather's Story
– by Max Apple

The story of an immigrant Lithuanian Jewish family and the bond between grandfather and grandson, including their sharing quarters during the author's time at the University of Michigan.

Pieces from Life's Crazy Quilt
– by Marvin V. Arnett

A poignant story of an African-American family in Detroit during the Depression, when different races shared neighborhoods and scarce resources even through occasional racial and ethnic discord.

Waiting for the Morning Train: An American Boyhood
– by Bruce Catton

The Civil War historian's own story of growing up in Benzonia, a small town in Michigan's lower peninsula, the book describes an era of trains and timber in the forests of northern Michigan.

**Made in Detroit: A South of 8 Mile Memoir*
– by Paul Clemens

Clemens' story is of growing up in a white neighborhood in the 1970s, of mutual racial mistrust, and yet of the pride that kept whites and blacks together, even as Detroit declined around them.

**Indians of Hungry Hollow*
– by Bill Dunlop & Marcia Fountain-Blackledge

A collection of moving stories of struggle, survival, love, and hope from a 1930s northern Michigan Native-American community.

**Off to the Side: A Memoir*
– by Jim Harrison

The Michigan-born and bred author of such classics as "Legends of the Fall" has finally written about his own life, including his connection to the natural world.

Backward, Turn Backward: Recollections of a Childhood in Northern Michigan
– by Beatrice S. Henshaw

A memoir of country life in early 20th-century Petoskey, a farming and resort area on the northern shore of Lake Michigan.

Eighty Acres: Elegy for a Family Farm
– by Ronald Jager

Jager's story of growing up on the family farm in Michigan during the 1940s captures the wholesome spirit of yesterday.

**Eight Steamboats: Sailing through the Sixties*
– by Patrick Livingston

Livingston recounts the stories of his sailing expeditions during the tumultuous 1960s,

centered on ships of the Great Lakes and the men who sail them.

Thrifty Years: the Life of Hendrik Meijer
– by Hendrik G. Meijer

The story of Michigan's homegrown grocery store empire and the Dutch immigrant entrepreneur who started it all.

**Stealing Buddha's Dinner: a Memoir*
– by Bich Minh Nguyen

As a Vietnamese girl in Grand Rapids, Nguyen is filled with a hunger for an American identity. Her barely conscious desire to belong transmutes into a passion for American food.

**Pulling Down the Barn: Memories of a Rural Childhood*
– by Anne-Marie Oomen

Blending artful language and style with the dirt, blood and sweat of farm life, this collection of essays tells a moving story of growing up in rural Michigan.

**Keewaydinoquay, Stories from My Youth*
– by Keewaydinoquay Peschel & Lee Boisvert

Told by a woman of both Native American and white descent, this story spans generations and cultures and sheds a rare light on Native Americans in Michigan in the 1900s.

Life with Mae: A Detroit Family Memoir
– by Neal Shine

Shine, longtime editor and former publisher of the Detroit Free Press, combines an engaging memoir of Irish family life in prewar Detroit with a biography of his mother, Mae.